

GATHER THE PEOPLE

Torah-Inspired Community Organizing and Development

www.gatherthepeople.org

How The Dutch Lost Their Empire (And Why The US Is Next)

Published by Econ Empires, 2025 (YouTube) www.youtube.com/@EconEmpires

The original narrated YouTube video that gave rise to this script, which includes extensive graphics, is available at www.youtube.com/watch?v=qc4WKnvThX4. The script is provided by the publisher, although with each line numbered and without paragraph breaks.

THE DUTCH PATTERN AND HISTORY'S WARNING

History is often taught as a series of explosions. We are taught that empires end with a bang. We imagine the barbarians storming the gates of Rome, the bombs falling on Berlin, or the guillotine dropping in Paris. We are conditioned to believe that the end of a superpower is a loud, violent, and obvious event that happens on a specific day in a specific year. But this is a lie. This is a theatrical version of history designed to keep you watching the horizon for an army that will never arrive while you ignore the termites eating the floorboards beneath your feet.

The truth is that most empires do not die by murder. They die by suicide. And more specifically, they die because their architects decide to dismantle the building and sell the bricks before the roof collapses. We are currently witnessing the final stages of the American empire. But if you are waiting for a sudden crash, a single day where the stock market goes to zero and the dollar becomes worthless, you're looking for the wrong pattern. You're looking for the Roman pattern. You should be looking for the Dutch pattern.

In the 18th century, the Dutch Republic was the envy of the world. They possessed the global reserve currency, the strongest navy, the most advanced financial system, and the highest standard of living in human history. They were the masters of the universe. And yet, over the course of 50 years, they slowly, quietly, and methodically ceased to be a superpower. They did not lose a catastrophic war that destroyed their homeland. They did not suffer a plague that wiped out their population. Instead, they suffered from something far more insidious.

Their elite class, the merchants, the bankers, and the politicians, realized that there was no more growth to be had at home. They realized that the cost of maintaining the empire was higher than the profit it generated. So, they made a cold, calculated decision. They decided to export their wealth. They decided to lend their capital to their enemies. They decided to financially dismantle their own nation to preserve their own fortunes. They exited the empire before it fell.

To understand what is happening to the United States today, to understand why the stock market hits all-time highs while the bridges rust and the middle class evaporates, we must travel back to Amsterdam in 1780. The parallels are not just striking, they are terrifying. The Dutch pattern is the blueprint for how a hegemonic power hollows itself out. It is the story of how a nation of producers becomes a nation of speculators and how a ruling class separates its own destiny from the destiny of its people.

Let us begin in the golden age. In the 1600s, the Dutch were the workshop of the world. They were the innovators. They invented the sawmill. They perfected the Floyd ship, which could carry more cargo with fewer crew than any other vessel. And they mastered the art of wind energy. They were a nation of hard assets and hard work. They imported raw timber and iron, processed it with superior technology, and exported finished ships and machinery. This productivity created a massive surplus of capital. Amsterdam became the richest city on Earth because it was the most productive city on Earth. The Dutch Gilder was the world reserve currency, not because of a military decree, but because everyone wanted Dutch goods. The currency was backed by the sweat, the engineering, and the physical dominance of the Dutch economy.

But success breeds a specific type of cancer. As the Dutch became wealthier, wages rose. The standard of living skyrocketed. It became expensive to build ships in Amsterdam compared to the rising competitors in England and France. The Dutch labor force became accustomed to luxury. They were no longer the hungry, scrappy innovators of the previous generation. They were the comfortable, complacent inheritors of a fortune. And this is where the pivot happens. This is the moment the cancer metastasizes.

The Dutch capital holders, the merchant families who ran the Dutch East India Company in the Bank of Amsterdam, looked at the numbers. They saw that the return on investment for building a factory in the Netherlands was falling. Labor was too expensive. Regulations were too high. The domestic market was saturated. So they asked themselves a fatal question. Why should we go through the trouble of running businesses and managing workers when we can simply lend money?

And so the Dutch Republic shifted from an economy of production to an economy of finance. They stopped being the workshop of the world and became the banker of the world. This moment is celebrated by economists as a sign of sophistication. And they call it the financialization of an economy. They tell you it is the natural evolution of a developed nation. But in reality, it is the beginning of the death spiral. When an empire stops making things and starts making money for money, it has signed its own death warrant. Throughout the 1700s, the Amsterdam Stock Exchange became a casino. The Dutch elite invented complex financial instruments, derivatives, and futures contracts. They created bubbles in exotic assets. They felt richer than ever because the numbers in their ledgers were going up.

But the physical economy was rotting. The shipyards began to close. The skilled engineers began to die off without replacements. The fishing fleets shrank. The middle class, which had been the backbone of the Golden Age, began to fracture. But the elite did not care because they had found a new host for their capital. They looked across the channel to their great rival, Great Britain. Britain in the 1700s was what the Dutch used to be. Hungry, aggressive, and industrializing.

Britain wanted to build an empire, but it needed money. The Dutch elite had all the money. And here lies the ultimate betrayal of the Dutch pattern.

The Dutch bankers began to lend massive amounts of capital to the British government and British corporations. They bought British bonds. They invested in the British East India Company, the direct competitor to their own national interests. They funded the very navy that would eventually blockade their ports and strangle their economy. Why would they do this? Why would they fund their own executioner? Because the return on investment was higher. A Dutch banker did not care if the flag flying over the ocean was Dutch or British. As long as the interest payments arrived on time, capital has no fatherland.

This is the great exit. It is not a physical exit where people pack their bags and leave. It is a financial exit. It is the migration of value. The Dutch elite kept living in their beautiful canal houses in Amsterdam. They kept wearing their powdered wigs and attending their balls. But their wealth was no longer tied to the health of the Dutch Republic. If the Netherlands collapsed, they would still be rich because their assets were safely parked in London, earning 5% interest guaranteed by the British crown. They had detached. They had built a lifeboat for themselves and drilled a hole in the side of the ship for everyone else.

Now, fast forward to the United States of America. We are living through the exact same cycle. The timelines map perfectly. The US had its golden age of production from 1945 to 1970. We were the workshop of the world. We made the steel, the cars, the electronics. The dollar was king because American industry was king. But then the same pressures emerged. Wages rose. Regulations increased. The rest of the world began to catch up. And just like the Dutch, the American elite made the pivot. In the 1980s and 90s, we decided that manufacturing was dirty and old-fashioned. We decided that the future was services and finance. We began to dismantle the physical economy. We shipped the factories to China, to Mexico, to Vietnam. We told the American worker that this was good for them, that they would get cheaper goods at Walmart.

But what we were really doing was the Dutch pivot. We were shutting down the engine of value creation and replacing it with the engine of financial extraction. Wall Street replaced Detroit. The derivative replaced the widget. And just like in Amsterdam, the numbers went up. The GDP rose. The stock market soared. The elite celebrated their genius. They coined terms like the great moderation. They told us that they had solved the problem of boom and bust. But all they had done was burn the furniture to heat the house.

This financialization created a massive surplus of capital at the top just as it did in the Netherlands. And this capital needed somewhere to go. It couldn't go into American factories because they were closed. It couldn't go into American infrastructure because that yields a low return. So where did it go? It went into the global market. It went into funding the industrialization of China. Just as the Dutch funded the rise of Britain, the American financial elite funded the rise of China. American Capital built the factories in Shenzhen. American Capital provided the technology transfers. American Capital bought the IPOs of Chinese giants. The logic was identical. Why should I pay an American worker \$25 an hour when I can pay a Chinese worker \$2 an hour and pocket the difference?

This is the betrayal. The American elite detached their fortune from the American nation. Today, if the United States economy goes into a recession, Apple does not fail. Apple has customers in

India, in Europe, in China. If the US dollar collapses, Black Rock does not go broke. Black Rock owns assets in every currency, in every jurisdiction. They have hedged their exposure. They have executed the Dutch exit. They are physically present in New York and Washington. But their loyalty is to the global flow of capital, not to the land or the people of the United States.

But the Dutch pattern is not just about where the money goes. It is about what happens to the society left behind. In the late 1700s, as the Dutch economy hollowed out, the society became polarized and decadent. The rich retreated into gated communities and high society. They became obsessed with status, with fashion, with the trivialities of court intrigue. This was the Perrywig era, a time of massive wigs and massive ignorance. Meanwhile, the poor descended into squalor. The poorism crisis in Dutch cities became legendary. There were riots. There was anger. But there was no solution because the resources needed to fix the problem had already been sent to London.

Look at America today. We have our own Perrywig era. We have a culture obsessed with celebrity, with identity politics, with distraction. We have a media apparatus that keeps the population fighting over cultural issues, over which bathroom to use, over which statues to tear down, while the economic foundation rots. This is not an accident. This is a feature of the decline. When the elite can no longer offer the people prosperity, they offer them spectacle. They offer them circus. And while the people are distracted by the circus, the elite are busy moving the last of the gold out of the vault. The mechanism of this modern exit is more sophisticated than it was in the 18th century, but the result is the same. The Dutch used bonds and merchant banks. The American elite used the Euro dollar system, offshore tax havens, and now the digital ledger.

We must understand the role of debt in this exit. In the final stages of the Dutch Republic, the state took on massive amounts of debt to maintain the illusion of power. They borrowed to keep the navy afloat. They borrowed to pay the welfare of the poor. They borrowed to pay the interest on previous borrowings. Who were they borrowing from? They were borrowing from their own wealthy citizens. This creates a perverse incentive. The wealthy elite want the state to be in debt. Why? Because the interest payments on that debt are a wealth transfer from the taxpayer to the bond holder. When the US government runs a trillion dollar deficit, that money doesn't disappear. It goes somewhere. It goes to the contractors, the pharmaceutical companies, the banks, and ultimately to the holders of treasuries.

The middle class pays taxes or suffers inflation. And that value is siphoned off to pay the rent to the elite who hold the debt. It is a vampire system. It drains the blood of the productive economy to feed the passive economy. But eventually the host begins to die. The debt becomes too large to service. The currency begins to lose trust. In 1780, the fourth Anglo Dutch War broke out. It was the moment of truth. The Dutch realized too late that their navy was a hollow shell. Their ships were outdated, their sailors were untrained, and their coffers were empty. Britain crushed them. The Bank of Amsterdam, which had been the symbol of global financial stability for 170 years, admitted it was insolvent. It had secretly lent all its gold reserves to the Dutch East India Company, which was bankrupt. The illusion shattered. The Dutch golden age ended not with a bang, but with a whimper of a default.

The United States is approaching its Bank of Amsterdam moment. We have \$ 35 trillion in federal debt. We have over 100 trillion in unfunded liabilities for Social Security and Medicare. We have a military that is the most expensive in history, yet struggles to recruit soldiers and

maintain its fleets. We are hollow. But the elite know this. They are not stupid. They have the best data in the world. They know the math doesn't work. They know the debt can never be repaid in real terms. So what is the strategy?

The strategy is the great detachment. The strategy is to convert their paper wealth which is denominated in the dying currency into hard assets and network assets that can survive the transition. This is why you see the billionaire class buying farmland. This is why you see them buying sports teams. This is why you see them buying art. These are assets that cannot be inflated away. But more importantly, this is why you see the pivot to crypto and the cloud. In the Dutch era, you had to move your gold physically to London. It was heavy, risky, and slow. Today, you can move billions of dollars of value into the digital realm in seconds. Bitcoin and the broader crypto ecosystem are often sold to the public as a tool for the little guy to fight the power. And it can be that. But look at who is buying. Black Rock, Fidelity, the venture capitalists of Silicon Valley. They are building the bridge to the new world. They are moving their capital from the state ledger, the US dollar system, to the network ledger, the blockchain.

They are preparing for the day when the US Treasury bond is no longer the risk-free asset of the world. When that day comes, when the dollar loses its status, the American state will face a crisis of biblical proportions. It will not be able to import goods. It will not be able to fund its military. The standard of living for the average American will collapse by 30, 40, or 50% overnight. It will be a return to a harder, poorer reality.

But the elite will be fine. In fact, they might be richer than before because they will own the scarce assets, the land, the energy, the algorithms, and the digital coins priced in the new currency, whatever that may be. They will have successfully exited the falling empire while remaining comfortably seated in their penthouses in Manhattan or bunkers in New Zealand. This exit is not just about money. It is about legal jurisdiction. In the Dutch era, the elite relied on the fact that international law protected their investments in Britain. Today we are seeing the rise of private law. Corporations are increasingly settling disputes not in public courts but in private arbitration. They are creating special economic zones. They are effectively seceding from the legal system of the nation state. If you look at the terms of service of the major tech platforms, you realize that you are agreeing to be governed by their laws, not the laws of the constitution. They can deplatform you, seize your digital assets, and silence your voice without due process.

This is the new feudalism. The cloud lords are the new aristocracy and they do not answer to the president or the parliament. The tragedy of the Dutch pattern is the normal bias of the population. Up until the very end, the average Dutchman believed he lived in the greatest country on earth. He looked at the beautiful buildings, the history, the art, and he told himself that it would last forever. He could not imagine a world where Amsterdam was a second rate city. This arrogance blinded him and made him slow to react. He kept saving in guilders when he should have been buying gold. He kept trusting the Bank of Amsterdam when he should have been withdrawing his deposits.

Americans suffer from the exact same blindness. We have a religious belief in American exceptionalism. We believe that the laws of gravity do not apply to us. We believe that we can print infinite money without inflation. We believe that we can de-industrialize without poverty. We believe that our military is invincible even as it loses war after war in the Middle East. This hubris is the anesthesia that the elite used to keep the patient quiet while they harvest the organs.

Let's look at the infrastructure in the Netherlands. As capital fled, the dikes and canals, the very lifeblood of the nation, began to suffer from deferred maintenance. It was too expensive to fix them properly. Today, look at the American power grid. Look at the water systems in Jackson, Mississippi, or Flint, Michigan. Look at the train derailments. This is deferred maintenance. It is the physical manifestation of capital flight. The money that should be fixing the tracks is being used for stock buybacks. The money that should be upgrading the grid is being used to service the interest on the debt. We are cannibalizing the physical nation to feed the financial beast.

And just like the Dutch, we are seeing the rise of a rentier class. In the 1700s, the ambition of a young Dutchman was no longer to be an explorer or an inventor. It was to be a rentier, someone who lived off the interest of government bonds. Today, the ambition of the American youth is to be an influencer or an investor. We want to get rich without working. We want passive income. We want to speculate on meme stocks. This cultural shift is a symptom of the economic reality. When work doesn't pay, people stop working. And when speculation pays, people start gambling. A nation of gamblers cannot compete with a nation of builders. This is why the rise of the east is inevitable. While we argue about stock valuations, they are pouring concrete. While we trade derivatives, they are mining lithium. We have forgotten the lesson that the Dutch forgot. Financial wealth is a claim on reality. It is not reality itself. You cannot eat a bond. You cannot live in a stock certificate. If the underlying production collapses, the financial paper is worth nothing.

But the elite know this difference. That is why they are buying the real things. Notice the buying spree of farmland by Bill Gates and others. Notice the acquisition of water rights. Notice the massive investment in private energy infrastructure. They are swapping the fake paper claims for the tangible reality before the music stops. They are selling the past, the dollar, to buy the future resources in tech.

There's another layer to the Dutch pattern that is often overlooked. The loss of naval supremacy. The Dutch empire was built on its navy. It protected the trade routes, but navies are incredibly expensive. As the Dutch economy financialized, the taxpayers revolted against the high cost of defense. They demanded budget cuts. The elite who were now invested in British ships anyway did not fight hard to maintain the Dutch fleet. They let it rot. By the time the war came, the Dutch Navy was a ghost. Currently, the US Navy guarantees the safety of global trade. We patrol the straight of Hormuz, the Malaca Strait, the Red Sea. But the cost is becoming unsustainable. We are seeing the same pressure to cut costs. We are seeing a navy that is overstretched and undermanned. And crucially, we are seeing the commercial shipping fleet of the US disappear. How many ships flying the US flag do you see in a port? Almost none. We rely on foreign ships to move our goods. We have outsourced the logistics of our own survival. If a war breaks out in the Pacific, we do not have the merchant marine to support our troops or feed our population. We have sold the ships to buy the stocks.

So, how does the story end? If we follow the Dutch script, it does not end with an apocalypse. The Netherlands is still there. Amsterdam is still a beautiful city, but it is a museum. It is a tourist destination. It is no longer a shaper of history. It became a satellite of the British Empire and later part of the European Union structure. It lost its sovereignty. It lost its destiny.

The standard of living for the common people stagnated for a century after the collapse. They went from being the masters of the world to being a minor province. For the United States, the fall will be harder because we are bigger and our society is more violent. The Brazilianization of America is the most likely outcome. A society of extreme wealth at the top, living in fortified enclaves, surrounded by a sea of poverty and instability. The central government will remain, but it will be weak, managed by debt and incapable of solving big problems. The real power will reside in the corporate fiefdoms and the decentralized networks. The US empire will technically exist on maps, but it will be a hollow shell. The action will have moved elsewhere.

The new London is not necessarily Beijing. This is a mistake many analysts make. They think if America falls, China wins. But the world is different now. The new London is the cloud. The new empire is not a specific geography. It is a digital layer that sits on top of the world. The capital isn't moving to Shanghai. It is moving to the blockchain, to the AI nexus, to the private cities. The elite are not defecting to China. They are defecting to the internet. They are building a civilization that exists in the ether, governed by smart contracts rather than parliaments.

This is the technofudalism we spoke of before. The Dutch pattern leads us here. When the nation state becomes a bad investment, the investors build a new state. They are building it right now and they are leaving you with the bill for the old one. The inflation you feel is the liquidation of the old regime. Every time prices go up, it is a transfer of your labor into their exit liquidity.

So what can you do? If the ship is sinking and the captain has already taken the only lifeboat, what is the strategy for the passenger? First, you must accept the diagnosis. Stop waiting for the politicians to fix the country. They cannot fix it. The incentives are aligned against them fixing it. The math is determined. The cycle is turning. Second, you must adopt the mindset of the Dutch elite, not the Dutch peasant. The peasant waited for the government to save him and he starved. The elite saw the reality and diversified. You must diversify your life. Do not keep 100% of your assets in the US dollar. Do not keep 100% of your faith in the US pension system. You must hold assets that have global value. Gold, Bitcoin, skills that are in demand worldwide. Third, you must detach your identity from the empire.

This is the hardest part. We are raised to be patriots. But blind patriotism in the face of a looting class is not a virtue. It is being a useful idiot. You can love the land, love the people, and love the history while recognizing that the system is currently your enemy. The Dutch pattern teaches us that empires are not murdered. They are sold off for parts. The for sale sign has been on the lawn of the United States for decades. The sale is almost complete. The furniture is gone. The copper wiring is being ripped out of the walls. The new owners are waiting for the keys. You do not have to go down with the house. You can walk out the door, but you have to move now before the roof caves in.

History is a wheel. It turns slowly, crushing those who refuse to move and carrying forward those who understand its rotation. We are at the bottom of the turn. The Dutch lived this. The Romans live this. Now it is our turn. The exit has happened. The collapse is simply the lagging indicator. Do not be the last one to realize the party is over. History does not repeat, but it rhymes. The Dutch ignored the signs until the water was already over the dikes. You do not have to make the same mistake.

If you made it to the end of this documentary, you are already ahead of 99% of the population. You are willing to face the hard truth to help this message reach more people before the algorithm buries it. Please like this video. It is a small action, but it fights the censorship of silence. And I want to know your thoughts in the comments below. Do you believe the US can reverse this cycle or is the exit already irreversible? I read every single comment. If you want to understand where the elite are moving their wealth next, click the video on your screen now. It explains the rise of technofudalism. This is empire cycles. We don't predict the future, we prepare for it. I'll see you there.

Obviously, how we respond to the nightmare described here need not be limited by the writer's predicted coming events and recommendations for action—that is, to concentrate on the disastrous probable economic outcomes and to insulate ourselves from them by buying gold and other appreciating commodities.

A multi-decade social movement of the at-large citizenry can rebuild the structure and culture of American democracy. Exercising our citizenship, we can institutionally empower ourselves to hold governments and corporations accountable to standards of justice and compassion that serve the commonweal. The heart of the challenge in such an historic endeavor: Our unambiguous history tells us, we shall never again benefit from a unified national commitment to the commonweal without a strategic vision to reawaken our social morality and reinvigorate the sovereignty of the people as the indispensable underpinning of our democracy. (See: “Remaking American Democracy V: Reviving Our Founding Moral-Spiritual Covenant” [available at www.gatherthepeople.org/resources/Downloads/RAD_COVENANT.pdf] and “Remaking American Democracy VI: There is Hope, But the Price is Daunting” [available at www.gatherthepeople.org/resources/Downloads/RAD_DEMOS.pdf]).

—Moshe ben Asher